

Lecture Outline

The American Thesis

I. Introduction

1. The reasons for a reintroduction to this subject.

II. Assessment of American Philosophical Trends

1. Experimentalism
2. Practicality
3. Materialism
4. Idealism

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III. The Contrast Between American and Marxist Philosophies

1. Americans reject an absolute metaphysical explanation of reality.
2. Communist rationalism has resulted in irrational absolutism.

IV. American Concepts of Truth

1. American experimentalism distrusts abstractions, such as the dialectic.
2. Therefore a true principle is one which works in practice.
3. But the principle must be in harmony with others held and practiced.  
This suggests the essentially pragmatic approach which appears typical of Americans.
4. Truth, then, is not something which merely works, but which is also socially, morally right.

V. The Historical Background of The American Thesis

1. The contributions of John Locke
2. The contributions of Bentham, Mill, etc.
3. The contributions of Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Jackson, Lincoln, etc.
4. The documents containing these contributions.

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VI. Fundamental American Political Beliefs

1. The dignity of the individual.
2. Governments ~~derive~~ their powers from the consent of the governed.
3. The doctrine of civil liberties.

VII. Responsibilities Involved in These Beliefs

1. The recognition and protection of wide range of diversities.
2. The acceptance of the fact that our ideals are only partially attainable.
3. Means must be consonant with ends.

VIII. American Economic Principles

1. The ability of our capitalistic system to grow and develop in democratic interests.
2. The wide range of economic activity possible in this country.
3. The rejection of the "only way" approach.

IX. Application of These Principles Internationally

While they are working internally, we find because of Communism and The USSR it is not always possible to make them available internationally.

Nevertheless, we stand for:

1. Establishment of world peace through the United Nations.
2. The right of all peoples to self-determination.
3. The access of all states, on equal terms, to the trade and raw materials of the world.
4. Full cooperation in the economic field to assure economic recovery and stability.
5. The limitation of armed aggression.

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